A crisis in education? An Arendtian perspective on citizenship and belonging in France and England

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Abstract

This article draws together a comparative sociological analysis and a political theory perspective (Arendt 1961, 1971) to interpret children's views on the role of school and being a pupil, and what these tell us about their conceptual representations of citizenship and belonging in France and England. It presents research findings from a cross-national ethnographic study with 10- and 11-year-old children in two primary schools, one in France and one in England. This article shows that children's views generally reflected national value orientations around citizenship and belonging, but that these conceptions of citizenship were not always fully understood by children, and masked, in some cases, deeper mechanisms of exclusion. This raises questions about the place of citizenship in education in France and England and calls for a deeper understanding of the ways in which conceptions of citizenship are formed through children's experience of school.

Keywords
Citizenship, education, youth, Arendt, France, England

Introduction

Young people's attitudes to citizenship have been a focal point for policy makers, the media and academic research over the past few decades (Giroux 2008; Staeheli, Attoh and Mitchell 2013; Morrice 2017; Biesta 2012). Much of the focus in public discourse has been on young people's democratic participation and the increased disengagement of youth from political and civic life (Foa and Mounk 2017; Keating and Janmaat 2016), the rise in anti-social behaviour (Kennelly and Dillabough 2008) and, more recently, on the failure of "integration" of diverse populations and the risk of communitarianism and possibly extremism this might present (Joppke 2017). It is agreed that the way in which young people engage with belonging and citizenship will have far-reaching consequences on the future of Western democracies in political, economic, cultural and social terms (Alba and Holdaway 2014). However, the ways in which young people will develop democratic engagement as citizens remains unclear and caught in a set of paradoxes. Policy and media discourse in the "West" have lamented the 'failure' of school to promote successful citizenship for young people whilst encouraging educational systems to find ways to better equip future citizens with the linguistic, social and cultural tools needed to participate fully in society (Morgan 2015; The Economist 2017). Recent curriculum reforms have sought to reinforce national values within citizenship education, mirroring

the re-emergence of a nationalistic approach to citizenship in many Western democracies (Fargues 2017; Joppke 2017). This re-nationalisation of citizenship in education is often at odds with the contexts of increased diversity and mobility characteristic of many of these countries (Vertovec and Wessendorf 2009).

These lines of tension carry both conceptual and societal implications for thinking about citizenship and education. In particular, they raise the question of the role played by national educational systems on children's conceptions of citizenship. How are different conceptions of belonging and citizenship experienced and interpreted by children within specific national and institutional environments? Citizenship in schools is not restricted to the curriculum subject itself but is reflected through everyday practices and concepts such as "school" or "pupil" (Alexander, 2000; Raveaud, 2006). As such, citizenship is a social and cultural practice, inscribed within the national contexts and institutions in which it is promoted (Olson, Fejes, Dalhstedt and Nicholl, 2015). In a climate of re-nationalisation of citizenship education, how then do different national institutional structures, values and practices shape children's *knowledge* and *language* of citizenship?

Whilst there is a wealth of research on citizenship and young people (Giroux 2008; Staeheli, Attoh and Mitchell 2013; Morrice 2017; Biesta 2012; Findlow 2017), few studies to date have examined the role of national values and educational structures and their impact on children's understandings of citizenship (Osler and Starkey 2001; Raveaud 2006). In the present paper, we seek to address this gap through a cross-national comparative lens, which investigates children's views on the role of school and being a pupil and what these reveal about wider conceptions of citizenship and belonging within two European countries: France and England.

France and England provide interesting comparative contexts to examine what young people's views on school can reveal about conceptions of citizenship. Debates around citizenship and youth in the UK and France are symptomatic of current challenges in Western democratic societies, similarly marked by a fear of terrorism, securitisation discourses and the rise of extreme-right nationalist movements in Europe (UKIP, *Front National*) (Joppke 2017). In both countries, education and the role of schools have been central to these debates. Despite diverging conceptions of citizenship and belonging, in recent years the two countries have developed similar policies of re-nationalisation of citizenship, echoed in educational policies which emphasise a unitary idea of national belonging and identity (Fundamental British Values in the UK in November 2014,

Grande mobilisation de l'Ecole pour les valeurs de la République in France in January 2015).

This article is premised on the idea that wider theoretical and political constructs, such as citizenship and belonging, are negotiated and re-interpreted at local, institutional and individual levels and expressed through everyday concepts such as the idea of school or being a pupil (Alexander, 2000; Raveaud, 2006). In order to critically understand the role of educational policy in relation to citizenship, it is important to examine the lived-reality and views of the children themselves and what these can reveal about their understandings of citizenship and belonging within school.

Building on data from ethnographic research with thirty-four 10- and 11-year-old children in two primary schools, one in France and one in England, this article aims to develop insights into the processes and mechanisms at play in children's experiences of belonging and/or citizenship in different national, local and institutional contexts. It examines how children's views on school and being a pupil can shed light on the ways in which wider discourses, institutional structures, values and practices shape children's conceptions of citizenship. This can help critically reflect on approaches to citizenship in school and develop further understandings of the relationship between wider national values and their reception and implementation in practice.

This article argues that children in each country held contrasting views on the role of school and being a pupil. These differences highlighted different conceptions of belonging and citizenship, which reflected wider divergent national value orientations in France and England. Children's views revealed differences in educational discourses (both official and media) and in institutional values, structures and practices. However, these conceptions were not always adhered to or fully understood by children, masking, in some cases, deeper mechanisms of exclusion. This raises questions about the place of citizenship in education in France and England, and calls for a deeper understanding of the ways in which conceptions of citizenship are formed through children's everyday experience of school.

Theorising young people and citizenship

This article draws together a comparative sociological analysis and political theory to interpret children's views on the role of school and being a pupil, and what these tell us about their conceptual representations of citizenship and belonging. A sociological

analysis can help understand the processes and mechanisms at play in institutions, as well as their historical, cultural, political and social situatedness, and the ways in which conceptions of citizenship are developed by children and young people (Sikes, Starkey and Connell 2009; Kennelly and Dillabough 2008). It posits citizenship not only as a legal status or political right, but also as a social and cultural practice, embedded within the institutions and national contexts in which it is developed (Olson et al. 2015). As such, a sociological analysis of the structures, values and practices in school can offer deep insights into the role of education in developing particular conceptions of citizenship.

A cross-national study can add to the analysis by revealing particular historical, social and institutional practices that shape citizenship, which might not always emerge in a single country study. For this, a closer examination of the concept of citizenship and its relation to education in France and England can offer key insights.

Conceptions of citizenship and education have traditionally differed strongly between France and England (Bertossi 2011; Girod 2004). Citizenship is a clearly bounded concept in France, underpinned by Republican principles, *laïcité* (secularism) and the idea of national belonging, predominantly of a political nature, inscribed in public values and the separation between public and private spheres (Raveaud 2006; Fargues 2017, 1). Citizenship has occupied a central place in the construction of the French Republic (Girod 2004), and as such has been a cornerstone of the French educational system (Osler and Starkey 2001; Raveaud 2006; van Zanten 2000; Alexander 2000). In England, citizenship is a more elusive and less clearly bounded concept, imported into public discourse comparatively recently (Raveaud 2006). Citizenship in England is understood both at the national level as a legal status and at a local or individual level as a practice (often expressed through the notion of "active citizenship"). It is less political in nature and can be defined as adhesion to morals and values, declined differently according to individual particularities or other community affiliations, with blurred boundaries between public and private spheres. Citizenship has had less prominence in education in England, and was only introduced as a curricular element in the early 2000s, following the Crick Report (1998).

Whilst educational policy and curriculum programmes define the principles and value orientations of citizenship, conceptions of citizenship are also inscribed within and transmitted through the structures, practices and values of educational institutions (Bozec, 2016). In many cases, the implementation of practices of citizenship in schools belongs

to the subconscious realm, and practices correspond less to an explicit philosophical or political project than to a set of implicitly shared values, expectations, historical legacy and symbolic representations that emerge from having been through similar forms of schooling and been exposed to similar cultural practices (Raveaud, 2006, 192). These different conceptions of citizenship are expressed through every day ideas and practices in schools. The very concepts of "school" or "pupil" in each country promote different "citizenship attitudes", understood as the transmission of values and their practical implementation in schools (Raveaud 2006, 170, Alexander 2000). These contrasts are expressed through different forms of school organisation, rules and responsibilities, which underpin different modes of living as a group, and by extension different "versions and visions" of belonging and citizenship in each country (Giroux, 2008; Raveaud, 2006; Alexander, 2000). Children's views of school and being a pupil thus reveal more than their immediate experience, and can help understand the ways in which they internalise and re-articulate wider national values to develop conceptions of citizenship and belonging.

A comparative sociological examination of the structures, values and practices of different educational systems can thus help identify specific national orientations in conceptions of citizenship in school. However, in order to understand how children make sense of these concepts, they need to be situated within wider socio-cultural or ideological discourses of citizenship and education. For this, we turn to political theory and in particular the work of Hannah Arendt on authority, democratic participation and the crisis in education (1961, 1971). Arendt's insights on the limitations of 'liberal individualism' and the crisis in education in modern times offer theoretical tools for thinking about the temporal nature of citizenship, responsibility and belonging; and open new avenues for applying political thought to the immediate experience of children in contemporary times.

Arendt's critique of citizenship in liberal democratic states draws on the idea that the notion of "individual freedom" is misleading in the way it defines norms that shape citizenship. For her, this myth of "individual freedom", inherent to liberal democracies, dispossesses citizenship of its political nature, to be replaced by a highly individualised and banalised form of group or state membership which blurs boundaries between public and private spheres (1971). This has led to a displacement of "citizenship", which loses its political meaning and becomes an a-historical concept, devoid of its social and collective dimensions, isolating the individual who is merely categorised along lines of belonging or exclusion (Gholami 2017; Kennelly and Dillabough 2008; Doherty 2008).

Today, this individualised version of citizenship underpins neoliberal discourses and state practices about what constitutes a "legitimate citizen" (Brown 2016; Owens 2012), in which individual choice and responsibility places young people along dichotomous categories of "good" or "bad" individuals rather than political subjects (Fargues 2017; Staeheli et al. 2013; Kennelly and Dillabough 2008; Oslon et al. 2015).

This displacement emerges as a loss of collective responsibility, which can be further understood by turning to Arendt's earlier essay *Crisis in Education* (1961). For Arendt, one cause for the "crisis in education" in modern times is the emergence of an absolute separation between the world of children and the world of adults. This shift, which created a "government of children", is falsely understood as providing children with individual freedom and participation in public life when in fact it has the opposite effect. By breaking the bond that enabled real relations between adults and children, which reflected the real world, "children's autonomy" overlooks the temporary nature of childhood and has lost the notion of *becoming*, which constituted a bridge between childhood and adulthood (1961, 181, *emphasis added*). Through this separation, children are maintained in an infantile state, in which *learning* is replaced by *doing*, and *working* is replaced by *playing* (1961, 182-183, *emphasis added*). Arendt's critique allows us to interrogate the nature of the relationship between citizenship and young people in contemporary public and educational discourse. In particular, it highlights the temporal dimension of citizenship. Much of the discourse on citizenship and young people has been focused on the immediate (reducing anti-social behaviour, preventing extremism) rather than their future becoming as citizens. This immediate temporality emphasises individual responsibility and behaviour, defining a citizen as a good person rather than as a future political subject who will participate in society.

The above discussion holds implications for thinking about the aims of this paper and the research upon which it is built. What does it mean to listen to children's views about citizenship? Is there an inherent risk, as argued by Arendt, to removing the child from the private sphere and placing her in the public world, from which she ought to be protected? The response to this is precisely in the consciousness that the world of children is not separated from the world of adults, and that as such, children's views at the micro-level, when theorised and situated within wider macro-level discourses, can provide new insights on social and political issues (Welply 2015; James 2007). This "politics of scales" of children's views (Ansell 2009) allows the analysis to overcome the separation between childhood and adulthood deplored by Arendt, by recognising that these views are situated

within wider temporal, social and political discourses. As such, this article is not interested in children's immediate *doing* of citizenship understood as school and classroom practices, which has been covered by a large body of academic literature (e.g. Invernizzi and Williams 2008; Grindheim 2017). Rather, it examines what the views of children on the role of school and being a pupil can reveal about their understandings of collective living and belonging in school; and how these views can help interrogate wider discourses on citizenship and education. In this sense, children are not asked to engage directly with the political dimension of citizenship in the public sphere, a practice rejected by Arendt, but their views and immediate experience are re-situated and theorised in relation to wider socio-political issues, to shed light on the way in which conceptions of citizenship come *to be,* and the role education plays in this process.

Methodology

This articles draws on findings from an ethnographic study, which investigated the experiences of 34 children aged 10 and 11 in two primary schools, one in France and one in England. 17 children from each school took part in the study. The two schools were located in socially-disadvantaged urban areas of medium-size towns, with a significant proportion of immigrant families and higher than average levels of unemployment. The study focused on two classes at the upper end of Primary school *(Year 6 in England, CM2 in France),* which included children from a range of cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds. In the French class, 17 children participated in the study, 9 boys and 8 girls. This included 11 children from immigrant backgrounds (who had parents who had emigrated from a different country), 6 girls (1 Hmong, 1 Laotian, 1 Indian, 1 Moroccan, 1 Algerian background and 1 Turkish/French) and 5 boys (1 Hmong, 1 Hmong/French, 1 Laotian/Chinese, 1 Algerian, 1 French Reunion/Cambodian)[i]. The other 8 children were "White French[ii]", 5 girls and 3 boys. In the English class, 17 children participated in the study. This included 7 children from immigrant backgrounds, 5 girls (3 Bangladeshi, 1 Russian, 1 part-Italian) and 2 boys (1 Bangladeshi, 1 Portuguese). The 10 other children were White British, 6 girls and 4 boys. Children were all from fairly socially-disadvantaged backgrounds, with parents' occupation falling mainly within a working-class category or unemployed (e.g.: nursery worker, lorry driver, cleaner, school cook, agricultural and factory worker). The researcher spent six months in the French school and four months in the English school, as a full-time participant observer, following one

class in each school. During this time, extensive field notes were collected from school and classroom observations, to provide a contextual background to children's views. Given the aims of the research, interviews were the central method of data collection, carried out with children (group and individual) and teachers. Interviews with children were semi-structured, allowing a flexible framework for them to express themselves, and discussions were largely participant-led, although, given the nature of the inquiry, the co-construction of meaning that occurred during the research was acknowledged throughout. Language and concepts were adapted to the age of the children to make discussions accessible by all (James and Christensen 2017). The choice of methods aimed to privilege children's voices throughout the research and particular attention was given to ethical issues that might arise from carrying out research with young participants (Groundwater-Smith, Docket and Bottrell 2015). The implications of sharing information with a group were explained to children and discussions were carefully monitored to avoid situations that might upset children. In order to guarantee confidentiality and anonymity for all children, all names and identifying details have been changed. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. Transcripts were analysed thematically, using a qualitative software package (*NVivo*). This article draws on two main themes: *the role of school* and *being a pupil*, and examines what these views revealed about conceptions of citizenship.

Citizenship and belonging in schools: crossed perspectives from France and England

This next section focuses on the views of children in the two primary schools. In line with the substantive and theoretical aims of the study, which were to understand what children's views on school and being a pupil could reveal about different national conceptions of citizenship and belonging, children were not asked directly about the concept of citizenship itself. They were asked the same questions across groups and across schools: *(1) What does "being a pupil" mean for you?* and *(2) What do you think school is for?* Children's views on these two themes offer insights into views on socialisation and belonging in school, and, by extension, conceptions of citizenship (or the absence thereof). Conceptions of citizenship emerged from children's responses, either directly, in the French case, or indirectly through the mention of "rights and responsibilities", in the English case.

Being a pupil: the "pupil citizen" (France) and the elusive "whole child" (England)

A strong contrast emerged in response to "being a pupil" between children in each school. In the French school, children understood "being a pupil" as a clearly bounded concept, directly associated with being a citizen, whilst in the English school, the idea of being a pupil was more loosely connected to notions of the "whole child". These differences in views can help us understand different conceptions of belonging and living together, but also, by extension, children's different engagement with citizenship in each national setting.

In the French school, children shared relatively homogenous views, which demonstrated common understanding and knowledge of the role of the pupil (*élève*) and its association with being a citizen. Citizen or "pre-citizen" was mentioned in many of the children's responses to "*what does 'being a pupil' mean for you?"* This status was inscribed, in children's views, within a set of values and attitudes: *to work, to listen* and *to respect*. These values and attitudes were constructed as objective ones, a form of social conduct, free from individual characteristics. Being a pupil, and by extension a citizen, was a defined status within the public sphere of school, and thus entailed a separation from the private sphere, dissociated from individual particularities.

> (1) Ophélie: it's to be pre-citizen, be pre-eco-citizen…be ecological
>
> (2) Ewen: for me, being a pupil is about respecting other pupils, respecting adults, being ecological, being a citizen and…well, to not do too many bad things.
>
> (3) Myriam: you have to be attentive…you need to give, address respect to professors, well, more importantly, respect your peers, not be racist. In fact for me, when we are racist, we are not citizen.
>
> (4) Marine: yeah.. to listen…to be a citizen, respect people, work, that you have to do.[iii]

Here, the concept of pupil-citizen held an autonomous status, which echoed the central and clearly bounded place that citizenship occupies in the French education system (Osler and Starkey 2001; Raveaud 2006; Girod 2004). This was the case in the French school. Citizenship education was a clearly delineated topic (*instruction civique),* which focused on democratic processes and symbols of the French Republic. Classroom rules took the

form of a set of guidelines based on citizenship principles, developed, discussed and adhered to collectively by the whole class, with a reminder of children's role as citizens. The concept of pupil-citizen functioned at a dual temporal level: the immediate (present) and the future. At the first, more immediate or present-focused level, the norms and values associated to being a pupil (listen, work, respect) served the purpose of working well in class and living together as a group, and thus were aimed at the good functioning of the school. At the second, more future-oriented level, the role of pupil functioned as a socialising one, to prepare pupils for participating as citizens in society. The notion of "pre-citizen" itself carries the idea of a citizen *in becoming*. These two temporal levels are intertwined: what is learnt as part of the good functioning of the school or the classroom is by extension applied to values that matter for later becoming a citizen in society. For example, "not being racist" and being "ecologically minded" function as pivotal values between these two temporal and spatial dimensions, between school now and society in the future. The two temporal dimensions of present and future are contained simultaneously in children's knowledge of the role of "pupil-citizen". This knowledge of a future role in society constitutes what Arendt refers to as "introduc[ing] the young person to the world as a whole" (1961, 251), thus bridging the divide between childhood and adulthood and preparing children for a role in future society.

In contrast, in the English school, children's views revealed that "being a pupil" was a more elusive concept. Their views were less homogenous and referred to the whole child and belonging to a particular school (e.g. *Emma: I think it's being part of the school*). Children put emphasis on individual behaviour, such as being "sensible", "good" rather than objective attitudes or values that guide conduct. Being a pupil was not a status based on knowledge but was focused on action, what children *do* in school. Thus, being a pupil tended to be interpreted as individual preferences, rather than an objective and clearly bounded status.

> Saalima: It's quite like....fun, because if you are a pupil, like …the teachers, if you have been a pupil in that class for a long time, you… like the teachers know you like in the assembly, in the class assembly, um I really enjoy science…and because Mrs. Rowntree knows that I enjoy science, because I have been a pupil for so long, she's got me...she let me do the science bit.

These views reflect some of the practices observed within the English school such as the focus on emotional and personal language for children to participate in the making of class rules, which stands in sharp contrast with the set of objective guidelines for the rules in the French class. This highlights the more child-centred approaches towards pupils in English schools and the blurred boundaries between public and private spheres (Raveaud 2006). When compared to views from children in the French school, it is remarkable that beyond some references to rights and responsibilities there was no direct mention of citizenship in relation to being a pupil. This can be explained by the low autonomy citizenship holds as a concept in English schools (Osler and Starkey 2001; Girod 2004). In this school, the only place of citizenship in the curriculum, was within the Personal Social Health and Citizenship Education (PSHCE) programme of study, under the umbrella theme of "rights, rules and responsibilities".

In other instances, being a pupil was simply equated to being a child, in contrast to being an adult.

> Katie: you're not like an adult
> Nabeela: you're a person
> Julio: In charge of nothing.
> Katie: Your mum is in charge of you.
> Nabeela: You are children…because…you have adults and childs [sic].

The contrast expressed between a child status and being an adult echoes Arendt's critique of the broken bond between childhood and adulthood in modern society, in which childhood is defined as an autonomous status, completely separated from adulthood (1961). Here, the temporal dimension of "being a pupil" becomes singular and static, focused solely on the present. In its state of separation from adulthood, the pupil-child is disconnected from any future orientation. Being a pupil becomes an immediate state of *a-becoming* based on individual attitudes and actions, as well as interpersonal and affective relationships with teachers. As such, belonging is limited to the immediate membership to school, the "here and there" without any reference to wider future participation in society, or citizenship.

The role of school: functional role (France) or fun (England)

Children's views on the role of school also revealed contrasting understandings of belonging and the relationship between school and society. In the French school, children's views emphasised the functional role of school, as a preparation for future life. Their responses showed a clear understanding of school as laddered stages with defined steps (getting to upper secondary school, getting their "*baccalauréat*", getting a higher education degree). Children's views established a clear link between the role of school for a secure future, by guaranteeing employability and belonging to society.

> Marjorie: school is to get a diploma, a diploma to have an even better job

School was perceived as performing a socialising function, which would protect them against poverty or de-socialisation. Many children mentioned how school would help them avoid becoming a "tramp", a "beggar", "living on the streets" or "being unemployed".

> (1) Ewen: school is to learn to get a job and not become homeless
>
> (2) Benjamin: if we do not go to school, we will be tramps (*clochards*)…we will be unemployed and that's it

Similarly to the "pupil-citizen", school was associated to a wider, future-oriented vision of life, part of becoming a member of society. Unlike the "pupil-citizen", however, this role of school encompassed public and private spheres, which encompasses individual, social, economic and political futures (Welply 2017, 11-10). The homogeneity of children's views revealed an understanding of a unitary educational system, with clear structures and goals, but also a more discouraging discourse of deficit around school failure and poverty, to which these children, living in areas of strong socio-economic disadvantage, would be regularly exposed, within and outside school.

In the English case, children's answers stood in sharp contrast to their French counterparts. The main emphasis was on school as being for entertainment ("fun"), although it was also in some instances associated to learning, being literate, and future employability. This view built on individual preferences or attitudes ("I hate science",

"you get bored", "you can't be bothered", "you feel proud") and interpersonal relationships ("you make friends", "you meet new people").

(1) Sandra: For fun, play time…It's for fun cause if you think about it, not all of our lesson is boring.

(2) Brenda: You get to meet all of your friends, but if you are just at home, and you have a home school, you wouldn't be able to have any friends or anyone.

(3) Lina: School is for... so you are not dumb in the future
Nabeela: so you can read and write...
Julio: And so you get a lot of money

The role of school was thus less clearly defined than in the French school and more focused on the immediate needs and social world of the individual child (having fun, making friends) or the self-realisation of the individual of the future ("you get a lot of money", "you are not dumb"). This is reminiscent of Arendt's critique of highly individualised and banalised form of group membership (1971) and wider neoliberal and consumerist discourses (Ball and Olmedo 2012; Doherty 2007).

From "savages" (France) to "punks" (England): de-legitimised belonging and citizenship

This initial contrast between knowledge of a future oriented "pupil-citizen" in the French school and a more elusive and individualised "whole child" in need of entertainment in the English school seems to point to the distinction established by Arendt between the benefits of a system which favours learning over doing and work over play, and prepares children for a future transition to adulthood; and the disadvantages of an autonomous government of children, dominated by entertainment rather than work and fully cut off from the adult world (1961). However, this rather stark distinction is blurred when looking at the ways in which this knowledge of citizenship operates in children's self-definition. In the French school, children's clear understanding and knowledge of the "pupil-citizen" and the role of school did not always act in the intended inclusive way and in some cases performed a delegitimising function.

Farida: what kind of pupil am I? I'm…a pre-savage
Britney: I would describe myself as a savage! I come from the jungle, yeah, I have a group of friends, they are so great! Savages like me by the way!
Farida: we have the same religion: being savages!
Britney: savagery!
Imed: we have the same religion: savagery!

The children's above play on the notion of "savage" (*sauvage*) could at first glance be simply interpreted as banter. However, when related to children's earlier conceptions and knowledge of the "pupil-citizen" the use of the term becomes less innocuous. Through their playful exchange, the children, all from immigrant backgrounds, operate a reversal of norms, which is closely mapped to their previous comments about being a pupil and a citizen. Rather than being "pre-citizens", they re-define themselves as "*pre-savages*". The French Republican principle of *laïcité* (secularism), which excludes religion from the public sphere, is also subverted through the reference of a "*shared religion: savagery*". In doing so children position themselves outside the legitimate norms and values attached to being a good pupil in school and a future citizen. This de-legitimation is further emphasised by the fact that two of the children were Muslim, and often felt targeted by the "no religion" rule (for further discussion see Welply 2017).

This de-legitimisation as a pupil did not emerge in a void. It is inscribed in wider negative discourses in France on young people living in socially-disadvantaged urban fringes (*banlieues*) with a significant proportion of post-colonial immigration.

Britney : oooh…we are savages!
Imed: the teacher said we were……
Ophélie : that we were impolite, badly brought up… she told our parents
Farida: she says that we eat loudly in class, we chew…
Ophélie : She told us we are not pupils this year, that we are like animals
Britney: yes the other teacher, she said that our teacher uses a little bell to make you sit down immediately and she said "yes, you are like a heard of mammoths, so she needs a bell".

In this example, teacher's use of animal language reported by children echoes some of the views expressed by the teachers during observations, which portrayed children as

'uncivilised' and in need of "taming".

> (1) Discussion with Headteacher in staff room at lunchtime: Class teacher "you have to train these children". Headteacher: no, you have to tame them.'(Fieldnotes, French school)

> (2) Class teacher to Imed (who is rocking on his chair because he needs to go to toilet but teacher has refused, then ignored him from 10:49 to 11:10).
> "Stop bouncing like a kangaroo or I'll send you to Tanzania" (Fieldnotes, French school)

The use of animal language by teachers and portrayal of children as uncivilised, are attached to a perception of teacher's 'civilising mission' in 'difficult' schools in socially deprived and culturally diverse French urban peripheries (*banlieues*) (Lorcerie 2011; Bancel, Blanchard and Lemaire 2005). This 'humanitarian mission' responds to a logic of adaptation of teachers in schools of the urban fringe which portrays children as the 'good savage' in need of civilising (van Zanten 2000, 232). These discourses are inscribed in representations of the Third Republic in France (1870-1940) rooted in ideas of educating "wild" and "untamed" populations in France and its colonies into French Republican values. In some cases, relationships were marked by (sometimes violent) confrontation with teachers. The teachers used jokes, sarcasm, criticism, putting down and threats. Here, children's views and teachers' attitudes themselves re-articulated the concept of the "pupil-citizen" within wider negative discourses on young people from the urban periphery. Thus, the bounded concept of "pupil-citizen" and the attitudes and values attached to it, operated a de-legitimising function, which positioned children from immigrant backgrounds and socially-disadvantaged urban areas outside the Republican ideal of the "pupil-citizen" (Welply 2017).

Similarly, in the English school, concepts attached to citizenship, such as rights and responsibilities, were re-negotiated by children through a process of individualisation, which performed its own de-legitimising functions.

> Colin: I can't remember them, I always obey them, but I don't know them...I created the bronze rules!
> Natalie: yeah he did create the bronze rules!
> Saalima: We have the rights to make rules, we don't…
> Colin: We can't get in trouble, because, under these rights somewhere we can't be put in trouble

Taahira: we have the rights

Siobhan: we do?

Colin: because...exactly,

Taahira: the human rights!

Colin: because you are making us say this, you are asking what we think of school, so if he asks…

William: it's our right!

Colin: so then if a teacher goes, “What you been saying about me ?” (strict voice) We'll go, 'it’s our right!'

Taahira: We shouldn't have the good behaviour rule, because we should go around being punks.

Colin: No we shouldn’t…why?

Saalima: She wants to be a gangster, and gangster's for losers….: And graffiti people yeah, you leave it, you get a book, with clean paper..…

Saalima: and Chavs...

Sioban: if you were a punk you can do everything you wanted.

Taahira: Exactly!

Colin: Can we talk about rights again?

Interviewer: Rights, go ahead.

Colin: Well rules are for our wellbeing and for the good of the children in the school. We can’t get in trouble, because under the…we have rights…Anyway, basically if we look in the UNICEF book of rights, we can basically….

Taahira: Who cares about them?

Colin: use them at any point to go against the teachers. So if you ask me a difficult question I can go, “Under the UNICEF convention article 13, I have a right to my own privacy, and I do not want to answer that question'.

Taahira: We have the rights to be punks!

This example operates an ‘individualisation of belonging’. Similarly to the French case, the children playfully evoke illegitimate attitudes (“being punk”, “gangster”, “Chavs”), which are centred on individual attitudes rather than an ideal pupil role and defined values. The joint-creation of the class rules, which could be viewed as a form of collective participation, is also turned into an individual accomplishment. In relation to citizenship education, this offers an example of what Arendt critiques as the substitution of learning by doing (1961). Here children have engaged in the practice of making rules, which can be seen as a form of active citizenship, but in this case it becomes disconnected from the

more fundamental knowledge of rights and responsibilities as principles of collective living. Children' s creation of rules is reminiscent of Arendt's "government of children", disconnected from the world of adults. This disconnect is further emphasised through reference to the use of rights "against the teacher". Here, the notion of rights, defined as a characteristic of being a pupil, is moved away from a framework of common good or collective will to something that allows individual protection against other people. The idea of a collective social bond in school is erased in favour of a view of rights as supporting quarrels between individuals in a litigious way. As such, the notion of pupils "with rights" does not hold an integrative function but works as an individual protection, which can be re-articulated as resistance against teachers. Beyond a reflection of the more particularistic values present in English schools, this can be seen as a manifestation of wider neo-liberal discourses, which centre on the individual in school and society, attached to ideas of "students as consumers" (Ball and Olmedo 2012; Doherty 2007). This dispossession of the collective notion of rights and responsibilities in favour of what Arendt calls the "myth of individual freedom" (1971) can be seen as symptomatic of the emergence of a-political and highly individualised forms of citizenship. Thus, the playful reference to "gangsters" and "punks" takes on a different meaning. It performs a de-legitimising function, by positioning children outside the "good citizen" category, echoing normative assumptions of individual belonging to society and the legitimacy or illegitimacy these confer to young people (Staeheli et al. 2013).

Discussion

This article has shown that children's views on being a pupil and the role of school reflected institutional structures, values and practices as well as wider national orientations and public discourse around citizenship and belonging in France and England. The two distinct modes of belonging and conceptions of citizenship that emerged from our data are thus, to some extent, typical of national differences in educational discourses and in institutional structures and practices. On the one hand, in the French school, central concepts pertaining to the Republican values of school were clearly understood by children in the French school, who shared a rather homogenous vision of their role as a pupil-citizen in a school system that they perceived as facilitating their belonging into society. This was defined as a clearly bounded "pupil-citizen" status in the public sphere of school, defined by clear knowledge of the norms and values

associated with this role, inscribed within a dual temporal dimension (present/future) that connects the pupil to a future role and belonging in society and confers a specific socialising aim to school. Within this, defined knowledge and language of citizenship were available for children, making this model more aligned with Arendt's call for reclaiming "tradition" and "authority" in education (1961) and the need to re-affirm the political and collective dimension of citizenship (1971). On the other hand, in the English school, there was a less homogenous and more elusive concept of a "pupil-child", defined through action, individual behaviour and interpersonal relationships, separated from the world of adults (Arendt 1961), and based on a singular temporal dimension: immediate belonging to the school. The role of school presented a more dual temporality, mixing ideas of learning with individual entertainment or future self-realisation, reminiscent of Arendt's critique of the individualisation of citizenship in liberal democracies (1971). Knowledge and language of citizenship were remarkably absent from children's views, apart from a few unclear mentions of rights and responsibilities, dispossessed of their deeper meaning. These differences reveal sharp contrasts in conceptions of belonging and citizenship, which are both temporal (future oriented *versus* the immediate) and epistemological (knowing *versus* doing). However, these distinctions are not absolute. Examples from both the English and the French school highlight the mismatch that might exist between knowledge and practice and the ways in which the very concepts and values that are meant to promote belonging and/or citizenship might be re-interpreted in more individualistic or exclusionary ways. In particular, it raises questions about the relationship between knowledge, language and practice in the development of citizenship and belonging in school. On the one hand, a lack of knowledge and language of citizenship might promote an individualised (and even litigious) mind-set as in the English school, which dispossesses citizenship from its political nature and might serve to position children as illegitimate individuals, outside of the "good citizen" category (Arendt 1971; Brown 2016; Fargues 2017). On the other hand, examples from the French school show that knowledge and a language of citizenship does not pre-suppose full belonging to school or society as a citizen and can have the opposite effect, by participating in processes of de-legitimisation, in which children are positioned outside of the "pupil-citizen" ideal. Whilst such processes of de-legitimisation were visible in each school, these modes of exclusion also carried their own national variations, located within wider public discourses and specific institutional structures. This allows us to put in question Arendt's dichotomy between *old* and *new* approaches to education by insisting

on the situatedness of both of these educational approaches, and the way these intersect with wider public discourse in children's views, such as "the civilising mission" of "savages" strongly present in French public discourse (Bancel et al. 2005) or the highly individualised neo-liberal discourses which surround education in the U.K. (Ball and Olmedo 2012; Doherty 2007).

Whilst it is not possible to generalise from the views of children in two schools only, this article does highlight a paradox that exists in wider discourses about school and citizenship in France and England: whilst schools are often accused of not contributing to the formation of "good citizens", the structures, practices, values and discourses in each national school system actually still participate quite substantially in shaping distinct conceptions of school and being a pupil, which define contrasting modes of belonging, and by extension conceptions of citizenship, for children in each country. However, these modes of belonging are not always inclusive and might act in exclusionary ways, defining ideal models of citizenship which children cannot inhabit, left behind a "illegitimate citizens" (Arendt 1971; Kennelly and Dillabough 2008). As such, citizenship education programmes need to take into account the structural, symbolic and conceptual mechanisms that operate within schools and might favour or hinder their implementation. In the English school, the absence of defined knowledge and language of citizenship made it difficult for children to articulate more political or socially engaged notions of citizenship and to critically engage with surrounding consumerist discourses. Children's lack of deep understanding of concepts such as "rights and responsibilities", their understanding of school as fun and relationships with the institution as individual rather than collective might present a challenge to the development of more inclusive conceptions of citizenship and belonging. The neoliberal undertones of many of the children's comments highlight the dissonance between recent forms of citizenship promoting political participation, national unity and values and the ultra-individualised discourses that surround them. Similarly, in the French school, the formulaic knowledge and language of citizenship did not allow a critical engagement with wider discriminatory discourses on youth living in the urban fringes. Children's views also showed how a sense of belonging in school might be dissonant with their local urban experience outside school, where feelings of discrimination were intensified. The clearly defined and future oriented nature of the "pupil-citizen" might in fact operate what Lauren Berlant terms "cruel optimism" (2011) by creating an ideal model to which children cannot identify, thus preventing them from becoming active political subjects. The challenge, in both

countries, would thus be less to "re-nationalise" or "thicken" citizenship through education in order to emphasise national unity and reach an increasingly "disengaged" or "dangerous" youth, but to address the tensions that arise from discriminatory discourses and institutional structures and the further marginalisation of young people that might arise as a result.

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[i] These categories correspond to children's self-identification.
[ii] This does not correspond to any official ethnic category as ethnic statistics are not allowed in France.
[iii] When numbered, extracts are from different interviews.